

Submission from the  
Governors and Staff of  
Carrickfergus College to  
the Committee for  
Education Stormont

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Shared/Integrated  
Education Inquiry



Carrickfergus College

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This submission is being made on behalf of the Governors and staff of Carrickfergus College.

**A Factual Information.**

1. Carrickfergus College has a total school population of 650 pupils when this submission is being written in July 2014.
2. Of those pupils, 122 indicate that they are of “No Religion”, “Roman Catholic”, “Other Christian” or are “Unclassified” in their religious affiliation. As a percentage that comes to 18.76% of the school population. Details available on “E” Schools.
3. The makeup of the borough in which Carrickfergus College sits would be overwhelmingly Protestant/Loyalist, which makes the profile of the College even more remarkable. Its feeder schools would again be reflective of this tradition making it likely that the College would have a very small non- Protestant pupil body.

**B Issues/Concerns/Barriers**

1. The Governors and Staff of Carrickfergus College have tried for several years to get funding for a variety of shared education projects but have been deemed ineligible as they were unable to partner with a school locally which represented the “other”/ “minority” tradition. Carrickfergus has no Maintained Post Primary School. Such projects would have allowed Carrickfergus College to progress its desire to have a new build, better resources and enhanced teaching facilities.
2. The Governors and Staff feel that with the profile of pupils in the school they go a long way to already being a shared education school welcoming to pupils of any religion or none.
3. The Governors and Staff of Carrickfergus College are concerned that by a quirk of geography they will never be eligible to apply for shared education status. As the criteria stand at present this is the case.
4. The Governors and Staff of Carrickfergus College have adopted a very innovative approach to every initiative from DE over the years. We pioneered the way on the Revised Curriculum and Learning Communities and have been lauded for our ground-breaking work in the field of Emotional Health and Well Being of Pupils and Staff, have assisted upwards of 20 other schools to set up systems to track and raise the outcomes of their pupils, but feel that in the area of shared education we are simply not being allowed access to what is happening.
5. Being a truly Integrated School is, in the opinion of the Governors and Staff of Carrickfergus College, about offering pupils of all abilities the opportunity to access the best teaching and support which can be offered regardless of religious background/ethnicity/sexual orientation/academic ability, allowing those pupils to complete their education as well rounded, independent learners. Schools which are currently deemed as “shared or integrated” schools were established and made to have a body of pupils from a diverse range of religious backgrounds. Carrickfergus College has had this diversity for over 50 years without recognition.
6. Having “Integrated Education” as it is currently defined protected by both the Anglo Irish Agreement and Good Friday Agreement leaves schools like Carrickfergus College feeling very marginalised. We seem to be unwanted by any sectors of Government or the educational establishment. We are spoken of by those who champion “integrated” education as being responsible for division in our society. That is clearly not the case in Carrickfergus College.

Fingers are pointed by the same people accusing schools like Carrickfergus College of not delivering good education to their pupils. Again, clearly not the case when both ETI inspection reports and GCSE and GCE results are scrutinised.

## **C Recommendations**

1. The Governors and Staff of Carrickfergus College would ask that the Committee redefine “shared/integrated” schools as being those which open their doors to all pupils regardless of who they are. As indicated above the current definition can mean that statistically a school has “X” % from the Protestant community, “X” % from the Roman Catholic community but there seems to be very little that demonstrates how the school actually meets the needs or desires of its community. How many community groups use its facilities? What level of involvement in the local community does the school have on residents groups or community forums? Is the school disconnected from its community?
2. We would also ask that opportunities to access funding for “shared/integrated” education projects be looked at to allow schools like ours to be able to apply for such funding rather than excluding good innovative schools.
3. Finally the Governors and Staff of Carrickfergus College would ask that the Committee lead the way in getting the message out to the public at large that schools like Carrickfergus College are to be valued and provide excellent opportunities to pupils in some of the most deprived areas in our province.

The Governors and Staff of Carrickfergus College would be prepared to give oral evidence to the Education Committee if asked to do so.

H Webb

Secretary to the Governors of Carrickfergus College

15/10/14